

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



August 25, 1980

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 80-52

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: 1980-81 EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

REFERENCE: All-County Letter No. 80-46

During FY 79/80, dramatic developments have been effected in the 24-hour emergency response program. Through the carefully planned and focused efforts of county welfare departments, systems have been developed to provide timely and significant intervention for children. In the vast majority of counties, emergency response workers are available at all hours to provide emergency social services to children and families under stress. Counties are to be commended for the major and positive program changes which have occurred and the increased level of compliance with state requirements. These changes have had a beneficial impact on clients and are another indication of a commitment to the protection of children from potential abuse and neglect.

The gains realized by this expansion of the emergency response program are substantial. A basic goal of the program is to decrease the frequency of instances when children are removed from their homes due to a report of abuse or neglect. Both frequency and length of removal can be reduced by providing support to the family in order that the child may safely remain at home. The initial social service response and the provision of in-home services are means of providing this support to children and their families.

In order to further the implementation of emergency response programs, the same state requirements are in effect during FY 80/81. MPP Section 30-113.1 delineates the program requirements for the basic emergency response program. Maintenance of prior year's efforts continues to be required as indicated in MPP Section 10-325.3. Further, the implementation of back-up services is still governed by the current regulations as they appear in MPP Section 10-325.3 through 10-325.5.

The department is committed to achieving a number of specific improvements in the 24-hour emergency response program during FY 80/81. While many counties have already progressed beyond the implementation state to achieve these changes, some are only now ready to make such changes. It is expected that during the current fiscal year, these program refinements will be obtained in all California counties.

In order to assist counties in satisfying the state regulatory requirements in this area, the state is continuing to provide an emergency response allocation for each county. Every effort will be made to assure that these funds are available and utilized by counties to achieve the following state expectations:

1. An approved emergency response plan must be in effect in all county welfare departments. Counties which have not obtained state approval must develop a satisfactory plan as soon as possible. Counties with plans approved during FY 79/80 are to continue approved operations. A county with an approved prior-year plan need not resubmit its plan unless operations or systems are changing. In that case, a plan modification must be submitted and state approval must be obtained prior to effecting the change.
2. The basic 24-hour emergency response program will be fully implemented in all geographic areas of all counties. Counties will have the capabilities of providing emergency response social services in all county locations.
3. Emergency response services will be available at all hours of the day and night. Telephone coverage and emergency response capabilities must be present 24-hours a day, seven days a week.
4. Staff must be capable of responding immediately. The staffing system shall assure that the initial face-to-face contact occurs no longer than two hours after receipt of the report.
5. Staff who conduct emergency response interventions shall be qualified. At a minimum, all must be at the Social Worker III or equivalent level. Further, the emergency response staff shall be considered in arriving at the required proportion of social workers with necessary graduate education, as delineated in MPP Section 30-113.4.
6. The 24-hour emergency response basic program shall be available in all of its elements in each county, as set out in an approved county plan. Whereas 24-hour emergency coverage and response capabilities may have been achieved during the prior year, the coming year will see satisfaction of all other requirements of MPP Section 30-113.1.
7. If emergency response funds are to be used for providing back-up services, they shall be implemented in priority order. Most counties currently provide, and desire to fund in part with emergency response funds, follow-up treatment and emergency shelter care. This will require that the first level priority back-up services be developed, i.e., respite care, emergency caretakers, and teaching/demonstrating homemakers. It is expected that counties provide these three first level services if they intend to utilize emergency response funds within the constraints of MPP Section 10-325 to

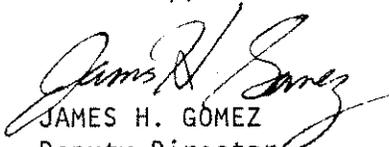
fund follow-up treatment, emergency shelter care, multidisciplinary teams and primary prevention services. County emergency response plans currently list the back-up services which counties are to implement and fund with emergency response funds. Should a county wish to change this list, a plan modification must be submitted and state approval obtained during the quarter in which the change occurs.

8. All back-up services funded with emergency response funds shall actually be available to the client in need. Some back-up services have only been technically available, or theoretically available as part of the county's system. It is expected that during the current fiscal year, such services will become practical resources for social workers to utilize in casework activities. Obstacles which limit the appropriate use of back-up services need to be removed. By this process, these services will become a demonstrated reality for clients.
9. Back-up services funded with emergency response funds shall be available at times they are needed. With the exception of multidisciplinary teams and primary prevention, back-up services should be available on a round-the-clock basis. For example, emergency caretaker services shall not be limited to normal business hours, but shall be available on a 24-hour basis, seven days a week.

These program refinements must be achieved during this fiscal year. It is recognized that this may require major program efforts on the part of many counties. State staff are available to provide assistance to counties in meeting these program expectations. Through the combined efforts of state and county welfare department staff, we are confident that these program refinements can be obtained. The net result of these efforts will be a further improvement in the system's ability to respond to families in stress and children in need of protection.

If you have questions regarding this letter or desire assistance in planning to obtain the desired refinements, please contact your program management consultant in the Family and Children's Services Program Operations Bureau at (916) 445-7653.

Sincerely,


JAMES H. GÓMEZ
Deputy Director

cc: CWDA